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The economic effects of municipal amalgamation and intermunicipal cooperation

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Propositions with the dissertation

The economic effects of municipal amalgamation and intermunicipal cooperation

Bieuwe Geertsema

1. Policymakers have no idea what the optimal size of a local government is. (chapter 1)
2. Despite this, they almost always appear to assume that if any change is desirable, it should be always be scaling up of municipalities and never scaling down. (chapter 1)
3. The bottom up approach applied to amalgamations in the Netherlands has rendered an ideal testing ground for economic studies. (chapter 2)
4. Given local budget setting practices it is incomprehensible that this thesis is one of the few works in the field applying a dynamic model. (chapter 2)
5. Local government finances in the Netherlands are not in any robust, significant way affected by amalgamations. (chapter 2)
6. More surprisingly, there is no evidence for any positive amalgamation effects on Dutch local government efficiency either. (chapter 3)
7. Due to limited monitoring by local governments, intermunicipal organizations are insufficiently urged to operate efficiently. (chapter 4)
8. Expectations of efficiency gains from either municipal amalgamation or intermunicipal cooperation should be abandoned or at least moderated severely. (this thesis)
9. Policymakers do not want to hear all this.
10. The search for the optimal size of local governments is both an economist's dream and nightmare.
11. The most important discoveries made during the writing of a thesis, are the ones about oneself.